



KENTUCKY COMMISSION ON THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

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GOVERNOR

HELEN W. MOUNTJOY
SECRETARY, EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CABINET

VIRGINIA L. MOORE
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KCDHH

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2008

TO: Robert S. Sherman, Director
Legislative Research Commission

CC: Helen W. Mountjoy, Secretary
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Stephanie L. Stumbo, Executive Director
Public Service Commission

FROM: Virginia L. Moore, Interim Executive Director
Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

RE: Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report
for the Fiscal Year 2007- 2008

Enclosed is the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) Annual Report for the fiscal year 2007-2008. As per KRS 163.527, this report is to be submitted annually to the Kentucky General Assembly through the Legislative Research Commission.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Virginia.moore@ky.gov or at 502-573-2604 (V/T).

The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Since its inception in 1995, the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP), administered by the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH), has served 13,650 applicants. From time to time the program has received letters of thanks from grateful recipients. These letters have served as an inspiration to the staff of the TAP, knowing that this program has been very successful in providing a much needed service to constituents of Kentucky.

"I am writing to thank you for the wonderful telephone I received today. I heard of the availability of a free amplified telephone from a farmer neighbor in Paris, KY. I was impressed with their phone and I certainly find talking on my new phone much less stressful. Thank you for making life easier for an elderly farmer!"

(Hard of Hearing Consumer – Shelbyville)

"I absolutely LOVE my new CapTel equipment. It works well and I am very proud that I can now become more independent and wanted to thank KCDHH for giving me this opportunity to participate in society again. Thank you!"

(Late Deafened Consumer – Frakes)

"At 107 I can still talk to my family thanks to the CapTel phone you provided me. I am a veteran and this is one of the best pieces of equipment I have ever received."

(Hard of Hearing Consumer – Lexington)

"I love my Pro 80 Gold TDD you gave me, but I can't wait till you start giving out wireless devices like pagers. Being deaf I need one to get warning messages for emergencies when I'm out and about and away from my videophone at home. Please hurry."

(Deaf Consumer – Louisville)

"The speech-impaired telephone you gave me is a blessing and it has changed my life by allowing me to communicate again. Now I don't hide in the house anymore! You are a wonderful agency, please continue the good work."

(Speech Impaired Consumer – Paducah)

**Telecommunications Access Program
Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2007 - 2008**

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Virginia L. Moore
Interim Executive Director**

In compliance with KRS 163.527, this annual report is submitted to the Kentucky General Assembly through the Legislative Research Commission.

“The Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing shall provide to the General Assembly an annual report on the operation of the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP). The report shall be due on July 1st of each year, beginning July 1, 1995, and, at a minimum, provide:

- (1) The number of persons served and the number of TDDs distributed;
- (2) The revenues and expenditures of the program;
- (3) Discussion of any major policy or operational issues;
- (4) Any changes the Commission plans to make in the program that does not require legislative action; and
- (5) Any proposals for legislative changes in the program.”

The number of persons served and the number of STE's distributed:

The Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) received **979** applications during FY 07-08. The status of applications currently in process of applying for Specialized Telecommunication Equipment (STE) during the FY is as follows as of 6/30/2008.

Status	Total
Approved	69
Complete	829
Incomplete	185
Denied	27
Not Active	3
Total **	1,113

** Total status count does not match the number of new applications received during the FY due to receipt of some applications in the previous FY and processing in the current FY, or pending incomplete into the next FY.

DEFINITIONS:

Approved - Applications approved and on the waiting list. Equipment has been ordered but is pending delivery or equipment has not yet been ordered at the end of the FY. Customers ready to receive equipment once funds are available.

Completed - Applications were approved and the STE was ordered, delivered to the consumer and paid for during the FY.

Incomplete - Applications are pending receipt of missing verification. Applications lacking information required to determine eligibility (approval/denial) are returned to the applicant with a request for additional information. Applications are kept pending for one year to allow adequate time to provide necessary verification.

Denied – Applications denied because the applicants did not meet the eligibility criteria in order to receive the STE. Notification is sent to each applicant outlining the reason for ineligibility and an explanation of why they are ineligible.

Not Active – These applications have been pending verification for more than twelve (12) months. During the twelfth month the applicant is notified and given an additional 30 days to submit the missing verification. If no response is received the application is changed to NA in the database and archived. If the applicant reapplies he/she must complete a new application with all required verification.

829 consumers received their STE during the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

A breakdown of these applicants by degree of hearing loss is listed below:

Degree of Hearing Loss	Total
Deaf	36
Deaf w/ Limited Vision	2
Deaf-Blind	0
Hard-of-Hearing	552
Late-Deafened	8
Severely Hard-of-Hearing	228
Speech-Impaired	3
Total	829

During FY 07-08 the number of applications decreased slightly. Deaf consumers continue to move moving toward alternate technology (i.e., videoconferencing, web cams, internet relay services and wireless devices) for their telephone communication services and the program does not currently distribute equipment to meet this need. Requests for equipment typically used by self-identified deaf constituents, such as Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD), continues to decrease with only 4.25% of the population served compared to 6% last FY, and 1.5% of those selecting the CapTel device rather than a “traditional” STE used by the deaf in the past.

The number of hard of hearing individuals in the Commonwealth, which includes those self identified as hard of hearing, severely hard of hearing and late deafened, continues to increase as the population ages. The highest demand for specialized equipment comes from this population, 95% compared to 93% last FY. Hard of hearing consumers utilize amplified phones, speech strengthening telephones, voice carry over telephones and the CapTel device in particular. The CapTel with USB port was added in 2007 and is utilized by technologically savvy consumers and those with low vision that wish to increase the font size of the telephone conversation and display the captions on their personal computer. The TAP served .33% deaf-blind or speech impaired individuals during FY 07-08, primarily because there is only one device currently available for these consumers.

Due to budgetary cuts experienced in December of 2007 equipment orders were suspended for two months until funds were reinstated as a result of advocating with the General Assembly during the 2008 session. This caused a reduced number of STE's to be distributed during FY 07-08. As of June 30, 2008 there are 69 approved applications, and 63 pending third level review, waiting until FY 08-09 funds are available to purchase equipment.

Due to the budget reductions outreach is only accomplished through partnerships with other agencies, word of mouth, and in-house electronic advertising (i.e., newsletter, eblitz). However, to optimize on outreach opportunities TAP participated as part of the agency's efforts in the 2007 Kentucky State Fair, and plans to participate again in 2008 to increase awareness of the distribution program as the population ages and demand increases. Kentucky's Relay Service provider, Hamilton Telecommunications, conducts outreach activities statewide and also informs consumers of the availability of the TAP. AT&T continued to partner with KCDHH in FY 07-08 to extend our outreach capabilities by including inserts in AT&T billing invoices. This partnership will continue for FY 08-09. TAP program staff utilizes videoconferencing, video relay interpreting, AIM and email, as well as traditional voice lines, interpreters, and face to face contacts daily to explain program requirements to professionals and consumers.

During December 2007 a mail out was sent to audiologists, speech pathologists, hearing instrument specialists and professionals that work directly with the deaf and had of hearing throughout the state, providing them with information about the program and a sample application. Consumers are trained upon request by KCDHH staff, volunteers, and local advocates on a case-by case basis. Consumers are provided with written instructions and videotaped instructions (i.e., Captel) as part of the equipment package, so one-on-one training is minimal.

The contract with Hamilton Telecommunications was renewed in July 2008, effective through June 30, 2011. Customer satisfaction with Hamilton Relay is well documented and KCDHH is satisfied with their performance record.

Equipment vendor contract renewals were processed during May 2008 and two pieces of equipment no longer available from the manufacture were dropped from the contracts, the Pocketcomm and Uniden 4248 (black cordless phone). Current equipment is being reviewed and will be streamlined as consumers and professionals alike are at times confused as to which piece of equipment to select. If funding permits during FY 08-09 wireless devices will be added and upgrades in technology will be pursued to more effectively meet the needs of all consumers served.

In order to increase awareness and ensure that consumers select the most appropriate piece of equipment for their needs, KCDHH will establish several demonstration sites throughout the state which display the equipment available through TAP. This will permit staff to refer consumers to a more convenient location to "test" equipment before they select it and allow audiologist and hearing instrument specialist to see and use the equipment before making recommendations. The first station is planned for the Louisville area, at the Heuser Hearing Institute, and additional locations will be established during FY 08-09 as funds permit.

In order to make the application process accessible/friendly to the deaf population, video clips will be added to the KCDHH website describing the TAP application and

the equipment available in American Sign Language (ASL). The video clip will also be converted to a DVD so that professionals can provide an explanation in ASL.

The KCDHH Internal Policy Analyst III represents the TAP and serves on several Advisory Boards for state, local and national organizations that serve the deaf and hard of hearing population. The IPA III serves as Secretary for the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program Administrators (TEDPA) national organization. The AT&T Advisory Board, the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network Advisory Board, the Telephone Relay Service (TRS) providers Advisory Board, the Vocational Rehabilitation Interagency Coordinators Council, and the Lost Chord Society hold meetings quarterly that are attended by the IPA III. Written reports from those meetings are compiled and included in the KCDHH reports distributed to the Board and archived as part of the agency's records retention.

Staff members from TAP also attended the following trainings / workshops / conferences during FY 07-08:

- Black Deaf Caucus conference at Eastern Kentucky University;
- National Black Deaf Advocates 25th Anniversary Conference held in St. Louis, MO, including workshops;
- National Association of the Deaf Region II Conference held in Sioux Falls, SD, including workshops;
- American Sign Language Expo in Louisville, outreach;
- National Association of the Deaf Regional conference, including networking with other states on program operations and outreach methods;
- Kentucky Hearing Speech-Language Association conference in Louisville;
- Northern Kentucky Health Fair, outreach to large hard of hearing population;
- Hearing Loss Association of America conference, including presentation on hearing aid compatible telecommunications equipment; and
- University of Kentucky Speech-Language Pathology class presentation.

Database:

The Access database utilized by the TAP since the program's implementation in 1995 has become overloaded and inefficient. The database cannot process all the functions required to streamline daily operations and agency staff completed research during FY 07-08 to find the best replacement. The Education Cabinet Information Technology staff, on contract with KCDHH, has assisted in selecting Oracle as the replacement. A consultant has worked in-house during FY 07-08 to prepare for the conversion, which has been a lengthy but worthwhile process. Oracle is a much more user friendly database and will allow staff to serve consumers more effectively and efficiently for many years to come. A significant portion of the TAP funds for FY 07-08, a portion of which was a savings from FY 06-07, were utilized to purchase, design, program and implement the new Oracle database effective July 1, 2008.

Legislative Update:

During FY 07 - 08 the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) filed a petition with the Public Service Commission (PSC) requesting that all telecommunication providers be included in the surcharge that funds the TAP and TRS. The inclusion of wireless providers will open the program to the addition of wireless devices that will not only be used for telephone communication but can also be utilized for notification during emergency situations. On March 17, 2008 an informal hearing was held with all interested parties and evidence presented to justify the request. Several wireless providers attended and one provider protested the request, stating that regulations were needed to increase the surcharge. The PSC issued an order allowing all parties additional time to submit recommendations to the request and the attorney representing KCDHH provided an amended petition. No comments were received and per KY Revised Statutes (KRS) the PSC has authority to make the final decision regarding the request. As of this report, the final decision is still pending with the PSC with an order anticipated to be released in July 2008. If the request passes TAP staff will submit a Request for Proposal to solicit bids to contract for the addition of wireless devices to the TAP.

With the passage of HB 406, the Budget Bill, and inclusion of language for FY 08 -09 and FY 09 -10, the funding base for the TAP remains at two cents per residential telephone line. Seven cents of the total nine cent surcharge on each residential telephone line is retained by Hamilton, Kentucky's TRS provider. This allotment for the TAP is effective through June 30, 2010 unless extended by the General Assembly or passage of PSC petition is finalized and a new order issued governing the collection of surcharges. If passed, it is anticipated that the overall surcharge will be reduced and the TAP will collect one cent from all telecommunication providers per the KRS. Language within the KY Administrative Regulations (KAR) governing the TAP will be revised during FY 08-09, including the consumer application incorporated by reference and procedures for distribution of equipment.

Financial Report:

After submittal of this report in July 2007 staff discovered that EMARS, the states' automated financial system, had encountered problems with the end of year reporting. The \$232,543 rollover reported for the TAP was actually the allotment balance rather than the cash balance, which was actually \$129,032. Those funds had been allocated for the database upgrade during the FY 06-07 but were rolled over to FY 07-08 until the database conversion could be completed. Therefore, the FY 07-08 allotment increase to \$590,000 included the 129K from the prior year funds and does not accurately reflect collections for the actual FY. A detailed financial analysis follows.

**The revenues and expenditures of the Telecommunications Access Program
For fiscal year 2007-2008**

REVENUE		Budgeted Expenditures		Actual Expenditures
FY 2008 Allotment		590,000		579,652
Rollover funds	FY 06-07	129,062	FY 07-08	10,348
TOTAL REVENUE				590,000
PERSONNEL EXPENSES				
State Employee Salary		110,500		99,849
State Employee Benefits/Fringe		31,800		31,741
Other Personnel Services		20,200		20,188
Other		3,000		2,759
		37,800		37,800
Total Personnel Services		207,800		192,337
OPERATING EXPENSES				
Utilities		3,200		3,113
Maintenance and Repairs		22,000		21,566
Postage and Related Services		2,500		2,496
Miscellaneous Services		6,000		6,626
Telecommunications		4,700		4,602
Database		155,000		155,389
Computer Services		27,000		26,890
Supplies		2,000		2,744
TAP Equipment purchases		153,000		152,613
Travel Expense/ Allowances		1,500		1,434
Miscellaneous Commodities		9800		9842
Total Operating Expenses		388,200		387,315
TOTAL EXPENSES		590,000		590,000
Rollover FY 07-08				
13-33-340-TBOO BALANCE	AS OF 6/30/08		FY 07-08	10,348

**Breakdown of expenditures for equipment distributed and the
cost analysis during FY 07-08 is below:**

STE (Telephone equipment)	Units	Unit Price	Cost per FY
Ultratec 1140 Uniphone	1	\$183.00	\$183.00
Superprint 4425 w/ASCII	7	\$338.00	2,366.00
Pro 80 Gold	10	\$423.00	4,230.00
Pro 80 Gold with LVD	1	\$423.00	\$423.00
Ultratec Crystal Tone Plus	95	\$98.00	9,310.00
Ameriphone CL-4205 Cordless	212	\$137.95	29,245.40
Dialogue JV-35 Amp Speakerphone	40	\$81.84	\$3,273.60
Ultratec CapTel	147	\$420.50	\$61,813.50
Ultratec CapTel with LVD/USB port	4	\$485.50	\$1,942.00
Starplus 45	38	\$79.98	3,039.24
ClearSounds 40XLC	73	\$78.85	5,756.05
Dialogue XL-50	47	\$93.04	\$4,372.88
Dialogue XL-30	1	\$72.80	\$72.80
Uniden 7248i Cordless	144	\$114.06	\$16,424.64
Ameriphone VCO	4	\$125.00	\$500.00
RC 200 Speakerphone	0	\$375.00	\$0.00
HC-SPAMP Speech Amplified telephone	0	\$60.80	\$0.00
Compact/C-TDD	3	\$208.00	\$624.00
PocketComm TDD	2	\$149.50	\$299.00
TeliTalk Speech Aid phone	0	\$925.00	\$0.00
Total STE (telephone equipment)	829		\$143,875.11
Signaling Devices			
Ultratec Clarity Tone Ringer	82	\$19.59	\$1,606.38
Sonic Alert TR 75 VAS	154	\$25.95	\$3,996.30
ClearSounds HT-CL1 Combo Signaler	95	\$33.00	\$3,135.00
Vibracell Ring – Tactile Signaler	0	\$90.00	\$0.00
Total Signaling Devices	331		\$8,737.68
Total Equipment pieces / cost	1160		\$152,612.79

One visual alert signaler (VAS), Amplified Ringer, Tactile Signaler or Combo Signaler, in addition to the STE (telephone equipment) is distributed per consumer upon completion of the application. Not all applicants request or receive a signaler, ringer or combo unit with their telephone equipment choice and some applicants may request a signaler only.

Discussion of any major policy or operational issues:

The TAP Advisory Board, which consists of consumers and agency representatives, meets at least once annually. The board met face-to-face in September 2007 and elected two new board members, one hard of hearing and one deaf-blind. Input on equipment contract renewals was conducted via electronic mail in March 2008 and other information and updates were provided via electronic mail between face-to-face meetings. Written reports were provided to the full Commission for approval, then distributed to the advisory board members and archived.

The current voting members*, Ex-Officio members** and TAP staff***are listed below. Consumer terms expire on a rotating basis effective June 30th and are replaced as needed by the board through the nomination process. Elected members may serve two consecutive four-year terms, while other member positions are mandated by law. One speech-impaired consumer position remains vacant because no consumers are available and interested to fill the position. TAP staff does not have voting rights.

Last Name	First Name	Membership Status	Term Ends
Stuckey	Robert	*KCDHH Commissioner / Hard of Hearing Consumer / Advisory Board Chair	2009
Ziehr	Jeremiah	*Deaf Consumer	2009
Green	Bobby	*Deaf / Minority Consumer	2009
Fowler	Lewis	*Deaf Consumer	2011
Lawson	Johnny	*Speech-impaired Consumer	2009
Vacant		*Speech-impaired Consumer	
McGirt	Melinda	*Hard of Hearing Consumer	2011
Caldwell	Shannon	*Deaf-Blind Consumer	2011
Skaggs	Forest	**KY Telephone Association Representative	Law
Stevens	Jim	**Public Service Commission Representative	Law
Freeman	Trish	**KCDHH Commission Chair	Law
Moore	Virginia	**KCDHH Interim Executive Director	Law
Holloway	Rowena	***Internal Policy Analyst III	Staff
Zulauf	Cole	***Document Processing Specialist III	Staff

Legislative Plans for FY 08 - 09:

If the PSC petition passes as anticipated and the funding base is expanded to include wireless providers no legislative action is anticipated for the TAP during FY 08-09. Should the petition fail, legislation to change the KRS governing the funding mechanism will be introduced in the 2009 session if permitted.

Plans for FY 2008 - 2009, not involving Legislative changes include:

The Internal Policy Analyst III will attend the National Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Association (TEDPA) conference in the fall of 2008. The Internal Policy Analyst III currently serves as Secretary of the TEDPA National Board and is assisting in the planning of the conference which will be held in Massachusetts.

The Oracle database once fully implemented will allow the daily processing of TAP application to move to a more automated paperless system, including electronic scanning of applications and documentation. This will allow the TAP to more efficiently archive data for audit purposes.

Addition of wireless devices to the program will increase the number of incoming applications and may require other staff to assist with daily processing; including hiring temporary staff should the demand for equipment increase as dramatically as expected. Group training sessions at centralized locations throughout the state may be necessary to ensure consumers receive the greatest benefit from the devices distributed. Consumers will be asked to sign up for emergency warning messages from the local Emergency Management offices and additional training of their staff may be required to ensure the messages are distributed in a format that is easily understood by the deaf and hard of hearing population.

Outreach plans for FY 08 -09 include partnerships with the following entities:

- Hamilton Relay Service;
- AT&T;
- Kentucky Telephone Association;
- Kentucky Association of the Deaf;
- Alexander Graham Bell Association;
- Hearing Loss Association of America;
- American Association of Retired Persons;
- Kentucky School for the Deaf;
- Mainstream Public Schools;
- Kentucky Department for the Blind;
- Kentucky Assistive Technology Services Corporation;
- Kentucky Department of Education;
- Commission for Children with Special Health Care Needs;
- Kentucky Speech Language and Hearing Association;
- Heuser Hearing Institute;
- Speech and Language Pathologists;
- Audiologists, Hearing Instrument Specialists; and
- Area Developmental Districts

Professionals, public and private agencies who serve the deaf, hard of hearing, speech impaired, and deaf-blind populations are also part of the ongoing TAP outreach. Staff provides informational workshops and educational materials throughout the year to educate the public and professionals about the availability of services from both KCDHH and the TAP.

A consumer satisfaction survey will be added to the KCDHH website by the end of 2008 to obtain feedback on the services provided through TAP. If consumers do not have access to the internet a hardcopy form will be mailed to obtain survey results. Results will be used to improve the services of KCDHH and TAP for all consumers.